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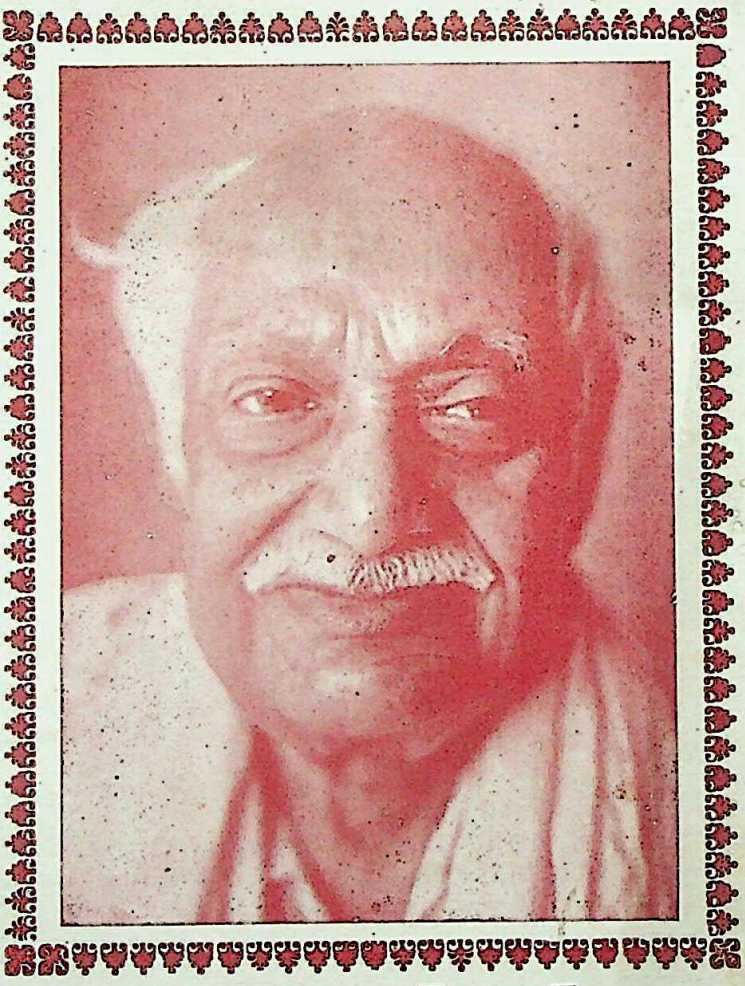

MAHĀMAHOPĀDHYĀYA

PANDIT GOPINATH KAVIRAJ

Padma Vibhusan

(1887-1976)

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LIFE-PROFILE

1887, September, 7	Birth at Dhamrai, Dhaka (Bangladesh).
1893–1897	Primary education at Kanthalia, Mymensingh.
1896	Upanayana Sanskara.
1897	Further education begins at Dhamrai.
1900	Marriage with Kusum Kamini.
1901.	Death of Kalachand Sanyal, his foster grand father.
1902.	To Dhaka for further education.
1904.	First poem in Bengali published.
1905.	Passed Entrance Exam. from Jubilee School, Dhaka in first division.
1906–10.	To Jaipur, Rajasthan for higher education. Passed F. A. and B. A. Exam. in 1st division from Maharaja College, Jaipur.
1910.	To Benares, met Dr. Arthur Venis, Principal, Queen's College, Benares.
1910–11.	Articles on Browning and Byron published in Bengali.
1913.	Passed M. A Exam. from the Allahabad University–stood first.
1914.	Appointed Librarian of the newly–founded Saraswati Bhawan. Remained busy in writing the History and Bibliography of Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika–Literature.
1917-18.	Met Paramahansa Viśuddhānandaji–Initiation from him. Death of Dr. Venis.

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1920–22.	The Princess of Wales Text published under his editorship and the first issue of Saraswati Bhavan Journal.
1924.	Appointed Principal, Queen's College, Benares.
1925.	Death of his mother Sukhada Sundari.
1928.	Met Mata Anandamayee in Benares for the first time.
1934.	Received Mahāmahopādhyāya title from Govt. of India.
1937.	Voluntary retirement from service. Built his house at Sigra.
	Passing away of Guru Viśuddhānandaji. Received Coronation Medal from Govt. of India.
1947.	D. Litt. degree from Allahabad University.
1950.	Death of his only son Jitendranath.
1956.	D. Litt. from Benares Hindu University.
1960.	Certificate of Honour from the President of India.
1961.	Physical illness–attack of cancer. Operation at the Tata Memorial Hospital, Bombay.
1964.	Padma Vibhusana title conferred by Govt. of India and Fellowships of the University of Burdwan and Asiatic Society, Calcutta.
	Special appointment as Director of the newly–founded Yoga–Tantra Deptt. of the Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, Varanasi.
1965.	D. Litt conferred by the University of

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	Calcutta and Sāhitya Vāchaspati degree by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.
1966.	Title of Sarvatantra Sārvabhauma conferred by Govt. Sanskrit College, Calcutta.
1969.	Passing of his wife.
	Permanently shifted to Mata Anandamayee Ashram, Varanasi for physical care. Admitted in B.H.U. Hospital for treatment of urinary trouble.
	Conferring of Fellowship by the Asiatic Society, Bombay and Gold Medal by Calcutta University.
1970.	Admitted again in B H. U. Hospital and surgical treatment done by the renowned Canadian Surgeon Dr. Ferry. Checked up also in Bombay.
1971.	Literary Award by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.
1973.	D. Litt. conferred by Delhi University and 'Brahmarshi' title by Madan Mohan Malaviya Siksha Sansthan.
1975.	Physical condition deteriorates.
	Vidyā Vāridhi degree conferred by Nava Nalanda University, Bihar.
	Literary award by the Govt. of U. P. Desi-Kottam degree by the Viswabharati University.
1976.	Vidyā Vācaspati degree by the Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, Varanasi.
1976, June, 12	Passing away at Mata Anandamayee Hospital Varanasi.

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"Believe and then know–Sraddhāvān labhate jnānam–this seems to be the motto of Indian Philosophy."

— **Gopinath Kaviraj**

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Biographical Sketch

(1887-1976)

Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj, who was destined to be the leading figure in the field of Indological studies and spiritual quest of man, and brought glory to Varanasi, the age-old seat of traditional Sanskrit learning, came to this city as a student of Dr. Arthur Venis, the illustrious Principal of the Govt. Sanskrit College in 1910 at the age of 23 years. Since then, till his death on 12th June, 1976, he maintained and upheld the noblest tradition of Sanskrit scholarship. He symbolised the true Indian spirit of selfless devotion to knowledge that keeps one carefully away from all personal publicity and popular approbation, holding with Manu, that a Brahmana should always shrink from celebrity as from poison. Such an ideal is rare to be found and so Gopinath Kaviraj would always remain an institution in himself.

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Gopinath Kaviraj was born of a Bengali Brahmana family on 7th September, 1887 in the village Dhamrai in the district of Dacca, now in Bangla Desh. His parents were Vaikunthanath and Sukhada Sundari Vaikunthanath died a premature death while studying in the M.A. classes at the University of Calcutta, five months before the birth of his only child. Vaikunthanath belonged to the village Danya in the Tangail sub-division of the district of Mymensingh (Bangla Desh), As a result, the posthumous child, named Gopinath after the family deity, was brought up in the care of Kalachand Sanyal, a relation of another village, Kanthalia, in the same sub-division of Tangail. The young Gopinath had to face financial stringency right from his childhood, which

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however strengthened in him a sense of self-reliance at the earliest phase of life.

Gopinath had his primary education up to the sixth standard in schools at Dhamrai and Kanthalia villages where-from he went to the city of Dacca and joined the Jubilee School. He studied there from the seventh to the tenth standard and passed the Entrance examination in the first division from the University of Calcutta in 1905 at the age of 18. By this time, Gopinath fell a victim to malaria and had to take a year's leave from regular academic life.

Deteriorating health and financial stringency posed before him a serious problem. He found the climate of Bengal rather inclement to his poor constitution. When he was thus seriously debating as to how he could study further, he came across, by a sheer coincidence, an article by Dharmananda Bharati on the Bengalis in Jaipur. The writer had detailed in that article the role of Bengalis in the administration of the state and gave an account of the Maharaja's College, Jaipur. What impressed the young boy most was the information that no tuition fees were charged at the College. This information was very welcome to the boy who was despaired of higher education due to precarious financial condition and poor health. He came to know from the article that the Dewan of the state was Sansar Chandra Sen and the principal of the College, Sanjivan Ganguli— both natives of Bengal. Jaipur presented a grand solution to his twin problems and the young man set out for Jaipur, a city totally unknown and removed from his native place nearly 1500 kilometres, in 1906.

Gopinath, however, was warmly received by two teachers of the College—Meghanad Bhattacharya, younger brother of the famous Indologist, Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri and popularly known as Guruji Maharaj—the teacher of Mathematics and Nabakrishna Roy, the teacher of English. He also met

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Sansar Chandra Sen, the Dewan of the State and was assured of all necessary facilities. Gopinath almost immediately drew the appreciative attention of his teachers by his wide range of study and singular devotion. Nabakrishna Roy, the teacher of English and himself a poet of some note was pleasantly surprised at the masterful explanation by Gopinath of a poem of Wordsworth (The world is too much with us). Here, he studied for four years and passed the B.A. examination in 1910 in the first class from the University of Allahabad, to which Jaipur was affiliated.

Jaipur provided a great scope to the young inquirer to quench his thirst for knowledge He was already introspective and a voracious reader. While in Dacca, he took to composing poems which though lacked maturity were nonetheless expressive of the philosophic bent of mind. At Jaipur he found a greater scope for reading in the rich library of the Maharaja, and his favourite subjects were literature and mysticism. He studied almost all available works on mysticism and occultism along with the classics—Greek, French, German, Italian and Spanish, in translation. Gopinath was a serious student and believed in thoroughness. He would take notes and never permit anything to be forgotten. He trained his memory in such a way that he could always refer to all books read by him. His interest for philosophy took a definite shape at Jaipur which thus played a very important role in his life.

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The final phase of Gopinath's education started at Varanasi. The young graduate came to this city in 1910 and met Dr. Arthur Venis, the Principal of the Govt. Sanskrit College. Dr. Venis was impressed by his bright academic career and advised him to join the M.A. classes. On the advice of Dr. Venis, Gopinath opted for Group D which consisted of Ancient History, Numismatics, Epigraphy etc. The Principal asked him to study, in addition, Sanskrit at the Sanskrit wing, He asked him not only to read the Bhamati commentary on the Vedanta by himself but also to attend

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the classes on Nyaya philosophy of Mahamahopadhyaya Vamacharan Bhattacharya, the famous Pandit who was the senior Professor of Nyaya in the College. The Principal granted him the Sadholal Scholarship as well.

Gopinath took his residence at the locality named Devnathpura and started his post-graduate studies. He had to go twice to the College. Dr. Venis used to teach him Epigraphy in the morning at his bungalow and he had to attend the classes of Prof. Norman in the afternoon. who taught German, French, Prakrit and Pali, Along with it, he attended the classes of Vamacharan Bhattacharya as well. He took the 5th year (M.A. Previous) examination held at Allahabad University in 1911. On account of a very serious strain due to walking twice daily to the College, more than 2 miles away from his residence, Gopinath fell ill and went to Calcutta after his examination for treatment. He then proceeded to Puri for a change and stayed for some months and could return to Varanasi by January, 1912 to resume his studies. He thus lost nearly 2 years before he could join the final year classes. As a result, he became a class-fellow of Acharya Narendra Deva, the famous Socialist leader.

Dr. Venis being acquainted with the difficulties of his favourite student allotted him a room in the Hostel. Gopinath shifted to the Hostel and again devoted himself to the studies. In the final examination he did brilliantly well. Dr. Venis and Prof. D. R. Bhandarkar conducted his viva voce examination and he passed the M.A. examination from the University of Allahabad in 1914 standing first in order of merit.

The result reached him at Nainital where he had gone in the summer. Dr. Venis was also there. Almost simultaneously he received two telegrams, one from the authorities of the Lahore College offering him the post of Professor at the College and another from the Principal of Maharaja's College Jaipur as king him to join the Mayo College, Ajmere. Gopinath naturally looked up to Dr. Venis for advice, who however did not

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approve of his Joining any college, but advised him to undertake research work in the field of Sanskritic studies for a few years more. Through the offices of Dr. Venis, Gopinath was appointed Librarian of the newly-founded manuscripts library of the Govt. Sanskrit College, Saraswati Bhawan and started his career of research. The University of Allahabad had opened a new Department of post-Vedic studies under the headship of Dr. Venis. The classes of this department used to be held at Varanasi. Gopinath was also appointed in this Department and engaged tutorial and lecture classes for the post-graduate students in the Saraswati Bhavan.

He served the Saraswati Bhawan as Librarian for six years (1914-1920) and then was appointed Principal of the College after Dr. Ganganath Jha, the previous incumbent who had relinquished his office. The first unsought honour came to him in 1934 when the Government of India conferred upon him the title of 'Mahamahopadhyaya' in recognition of his valuable service in the field of traditional Sanskrit scholarship. After serving the institution as Principal for 17 years, Gopinath voluntarily retired from service in 1937.

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Varanasi gave Gopinath eminence and wide-spread recognition. As Librarian of the Saraswati Bhavan, he introduced two series of publications which show his farsight and interest in Sanskritic research. His entire attention, by now, became steadily concentrated upon Philosophy in general and obscure schools such as Yoga, Saiva philosophy and Tantra in particular. At the same time, he started contacting the Sadhakas and Yogins in his quest for the practical aspect of the different esoteric ays of sādhanā The stages of the development of his personality may be pointed out thus–a keen researcher, a greatly gifted academician a devoted seeker of truth and ultimately a spiritual guide.

The two series introduced were the Sarasvati Bhavan Texts and the Sarasvati Bhavan Studies. Gopinath was the editor of both.

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The first series was devoted to the publication ot Sanskrit Texts and the second to critical studies of different systems and Indological issues. In the texts series, Gopinath himself edited, among many others, the following important texts: Kiranavali Bhaskara, Kusmanjali Bodhani, Kasa sara, Yogimihidaya-dipika (2 parts), Bhaktican-drika, Siddhantaratna, Siddhasiddhanta-sangraha, Tripura rahasya (3 parts)and Goraksasiddhanta sangraha. He utilised the rich collection of manuscripts at the Saraswati Bhavan and encouraged a group of Sanskrit scholars to undertake critical editions of important texts. Almost all the volumes had his valuable forewords.

The Bhavan Studies series was planned by him as a periodical publication in which historical and critical assessments of important topics by eminent scholars were published. Dr. Ganganath Jha, Batuk Nath Sharma, Col. G. A. Jacob, Nilkamal Bhattachaya, Dr. M.D. Shastri were some of the contributors. Gopinath himself contributed, by far the greatest number of research articles in these volumes. Up to 1930, some eight volumes were brought out in which some of his important contributions were : The view points of Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy; Nirmana Kaya (Vol. I); The system of Cakras according to Goraksanatha; Theism in ancient India, Some aspects of Vira-Saiva philosophy, an English translation of the Nyaya Kusumanjali (Vol. II); History and bibliography of Nyaya-Vaisesika literature (4 articles); Some aspects of the history and doctrines of the Nathas (Vol. VI); Some variants in the readings of the Vaisesika Sutras, The date of Madhusudana Sarasvati, Descriptive note on Sanskrit Manuscripts (Vol. VII). Thus in the field of bringing out a regular series of invaluable books and research articles on Indology, Gopinath proved to be a pioneer in the entire Northern India.

His academic interests brought him close to the doctrines of sadhana followed by the Saivas and the Nathas. Incidentally, he was the first to bring to light the doctrines of the Siddhas and the Nathas and a comprehensive bibliography of the Nyaya-Vai-

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sesika literature. He mastered both the northern and southern Saivism – the monistic and dualistic systems respectively, and found himself temperamentally attuned to the monistic Saiva philosophy of the Kashmir School.

Varanasi also gave him the Guru he was looking for. While a student in the Govt. Sanskrit College, he was impressed by the profound scholarship of Bhargava Ramkinkara Yogatrayananda (Shashi Sanyal) whose Aryasastra–pradipa had a great influence on him. Even before that, when he was a student in the school, he came to know of the great sadhaka of Bengal, Lokenath Brahmachari of Baradi from one of his teachers, Mathura Mohan Chakravarty (later founder of the Shakti Ausadhalaya). He also had a great respect for Yogiraja Shyama Charan Lahiri of Varanasi and used not only to read whatever was available about the saints and sadhakas all over the world but would run to meet the living seekers of truth and God.

His search for the Guru found consummation in 1918, when he met Swami Vishuddhananda Paramahansa, at whose feet he dedicated himself as a disciple. Since then he devoted himself to esoteric sadhana. Unlike his Guru, who used to demonstrate supernatural powers, Gopinath did never aspire to show yogic powers, although he had full faith in the doctrine of yogic powers (Siddhis).

Here was a man endowed with mastery over so many branches of learning, but without the least trace of egotism or pedantry. The strongest adherent to his own discipline, he had no sectarian bias and firmly believed in the truth that all the different paths lead to the same realisation of the ultimate reality. His basic faith in spirituality as the essence of human life gave him an inimitable childlike simplicity that was quite baffling in relation to such an accomplished scholar. He was optimistic in faith and synthetic in approach. His vast range of study led him to an eminence where sectarian distinctions naturally wither away. This is why he could so easily maintain his views without coming

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into conflict with the orthodox schools, the Buddhists, the Jainas, the Christians or even the viewpoint of Islam.

Gopinath came into personal contact with Mata Anandamayee in 1928. Both realised the worth of either and the contact continued until his end came in the Ashrama of Mata Anandamayee. In addition, he had personal contact with many well-known sadhakas of whom Ram Thakur, Meher Baba, the Parsee saint, Sitaram Das Onkarnath, Swami Premananda Tirtha may be mentioned. Bharataratna Bhagavan Das also had impressed him, whose work on Theosophhy drew his attention to that discipline. Dilip Kumar Roy, the well-known singer-disciple of Sri Aurobindo, also had personal relationship with Gopinath and some important letters were exchanged between them.

* * *

In 1937, Gopinath voluntarily retired from the government service. This year was important in his life as in that very year his Guru Swami Vishuddhananda breathed his last. Though all the disciples of the Guru wanted to put the mantle of the Guru on him, Gopinath resisted this attempt. He, however, took upon himself the responsibility to look after the Varanasi Ashram of his Guru, the Vishuddha Kanana, wherefrom he started the publication of a series in Bengali, under the name, Vishuddha-Vani. The series aimed at an exposition of the special discipline advocated by his Guru Swami Vishuddhananda and Gopinath was the chief contributor.

Retirement from service, for Gopinath did not mean a retired life. He became more active in matters academic and spiritual. He continued to remain the fountainhead of inspiration for the researchers who flocked to him for guidance and insight. Gopinath suggested topics, helped prepare the synopsis, directed the attention of young researchers to the salient points of the problem and even taught them the texts. With his profound scholarship and original ideas, Gopinath proved to be the

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real guide of generations of research scholars, who, however, were registered with formal supervisors in different universities, almost all over India. It was a unique selfless service of the noble savant to the cause of higher studies.

In addition to guiding research scholars Gopinath held classes at his house and taught the texts particularly on Yoga, Saivism and Tantra. If impressed by the sincerity of the enquirer, he would teach literary texts or elucidate the viewpoint of Abhinavagupta on literature or any other subject. Buddistic philosophy was also one of his favourite subjects. His approach being thoroughly original, his teaching invariably aroused keener thirst for knowledge in the taught. A contact with him for even a short period was sure to become a memory cherishable for the whole life.

Gopinath was associated with almost all the Universities as an assessor of research work. It would be no exaggeration to say that all researchers in Indology, especially in the northern India, from the thirties upto the sixties happened to be directly or indirectly indebted to this great scholar.

His personal contribution to the scholarly world also went on unabated. He contributed articles in Bengali, Hindi, English and Sanskrit. Uttara, Anandavarta, Himadri are the important Bengali periodicals wherein his articles were regularly published. His Hindi writings were mainly published in the Kalyan of Gorakhpur. He was also associated with the publication of the special issues of the Kalyan. On his suggestion special issues on Yoga, Sadhana etc. of the Kalyan were conceived, planned and published.

* * *

By 1960, Gopinath fell seriously ill. Medical examination detected a cancerous growth in the rectal region and he was taken to the Tata Institute of Bombay for treatment. In 1961 he was operated upon by Dr. Borgess of the Tata Memorial Institute.

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Mata Anandamayee and late Sri Prakasa, the then Governor of Maharashtra, personally looked after his treatment at the Hospital. The operation was successful and Gopinath returned to Varanasi via Delhi, where he convalesced at the Mata Anandamayee Ashram.

In 1964, the Govt. of U.P. decided to offer him the headship of the newly started Yoga-Tantra Department at the Varanaseya Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, formerly the Govt. Sanskrit College. The Education Minister Sri Kamalapati Tripathi personally came to him and requested him to accept the offer. He was allowed to work in his own house. Gopinath agreed and worked as the Head of the department from 1964 to 1969. During his tenure as head, an all-India conference on Tantra and Yoga was held and a new series of publications under the name of the Yoga-Tantra Series was introduced in the Sanskrit University. In this series, he himself edited three volumes of Tantrik texts – The Luptagamasangraha (Part I)–a collection of agamic statements of such texts as are lost; the Tantra Sangraha, a collection of 18 Tantrik treatises in three volumes.

Gopinath had been severely shaken by the attack of cancer and his health was gradually deteriorating. As a result, he relinquished the responsibility of the Yoga-Tantra department in 1969 and was prevailed upon by Mata Anandamayee to shift to her Ashram on the bank of the Ganges at Bhadaini locality.

Here in this Ashram, he lived for nearly seven years (1969-76) under the personal care and supervision of Mata Anandamayee. Twice he had to be hospitalised at the Banaras Hindu University and since then was kept under constant medical care. It was at this Ashram that the end finally came.

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The personal life of the great scholar was as simple and unostentatious as his public life. He was married early, at the age of thirteen, in 1900 to Kusumkumari, also of a well-known

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family of Sanskrit scholars of East Bengal. He had two children, a son Jitendranath and a daughter Sudha. His family consisted of, in addition to his wife and children, his mother who breathed her last at Varanasi in 1925. Gopinath lived in rented houses until in 1937 he shifted to his own newly - built house at Sigra. Gopinath outlived his only son (a sad premature death) and wife and left hehind him his widowed daughter, grandson and two grand daughters.

Though a family-man . Gopinath lived the life of a saint and inspite of bearing all responsibilities incidental to family life, was never ruffled in the face of calamities. True to the ideal preached by the Mahabharata, he accepted both adversity and prosperity with complete equanimity. His firm faith in the divine dispensation never flagged.

His house, like the gurugrhas of the past, provided shelter to a number of students and devotees whose material welfare was carefully looked after by him.

The biographical sketch presented here is naturally a bare narration of facts. He was successful in every phase of life, as a librarian, a principal, a teacher, a pioneer in Sanskritic research and as a man of profound scholarship. Although it is quite sufficient to mark him as one of the greatest personalities in the field of Indological studies, this was not all. Gopinath Kaviraj was all this and something more. That is why we prefer to class him as an institution.

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HIS PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS

1. Luptāgama Sangraha. (Sans.)
2. Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts. (Eng.)
3. Sri Vishuddhananda Prasanga. (Beng.) -5 Vol.
4. Akhanda Mahāyoga. (Beng.)
5. Bibliography of Nyaya-Vaisheshika Literature. (Eng.)
6. Sādhu Darshan O Sat Prasanga -5 Vol. (Beng.)
7. Tāntrik Vāngmay me Sakta dristi. (Hindi).
8. Tāntrik Sanskriti (Hindi).
9. Bhāratiya Samskriti aur Sādhanā. (Hindi). -2 Vol.
10. Bharatiya Sādhanār Dhārā. (Beng.)
11. Aspects of Indian Thought. (Eng.)
12. Sāhitya Chintā. (Beng.)
13. Sri Krishna Prasanga. (Beng.)
14. Amar Vani. (Beng.)
15. Tāntrik Sādhanā O Siddhānta (Beng.) -2 Vol.
16. Tāntrik Sahitya. (Hindi).
17. Patrāvali. (Beng.)
18. Sva Samvedan. (Beng.) -2 Vol.
19. Vijijnāsā. (Beng.)
20. Paramārtha Prasanga. (Beng.) -4 Vol.
21. Kashi ki Sarasvat Sādhanā (Hindi).

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